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3-MEMBER SUPREME COURT BENCH DOES NOT KNOW ABOUT VANUATU

A three-judge bench of the Supreme Court on Tuesday said there is no country called Vanuatu, while hearing a bail plea in a cheating case

COMPARES IT TO FICTIONAL KAILASA

A bench of justices Vikram Nath, Sandeep Mehta and N V Anjaria was hearing a plea by the man challenging a Calcutta High Court order denying him bail. "You are a citizen of which country?" the bench asked. When the lawyer said the petitioner was a citizen of Vanuatu, the bench said, "There is no country like that. We also know a 'country' called Kailasa"

ALLOWS PETITIONER TO WITHDRAW PLEA

- The counsel argued that the petitioner was already granted bail in four other cases. The bench then asked the lawyer for West Bengal, "How much time will you take to conclude the trial?"
- The state's counsel said it was likely to conclude within six to eight months. The SC permitted the petitioner to withdraw the petition

80

ISLANDS, SPREAD OVER 1,300 KM IN PACIFIC OCEAN CONSTITUTE VANUATU

CHENNAI ▪ MADURAI ▪ VIJAYAWADA ▪ BENGALURU ▪ KOCHI ▪ HYDERABAD ▪ VISAKHAPATNAM ▪ COIMBATORE ▪ KOZHIKODE ▪ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM ▪ BELAGAVI ▪ BHUBANESWAR ▪ SHIVAMOGGA ▪ MANGALURU ▪ TIRUPATI ▪ TIRUCHY ▪ TIRUNELVELI ▪ SAMBALPUR ▪ HUBBALLI ▪ DHARMAPURI ▪ KOTTAYAM ▪ KANNUR ▪ VILLUPURAM ▪ KOLLAM ▪ TADEPALLIGUDEM ▪ NAGAPATTINAM ▪ THRISSUR ▪ KALABURAGI

PM Narendra Modi with French President Emmanuel Macron during a car ride, in Mumbai | PTI

Spl global strategic partnership deal done with France

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

INDIA and France on Tuesday elevated their bilateral ties to a "Special Global Strategic Partnership," with Prime Minister Narendra Modi describing the relationship as a "force for global stability" amid rising geopolitical turbulence after a meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron in Mumbai. Following comprehensive talks in Mumbai during Macron's three-day visit, the two sides announced 21 outcomes spanning defence, critical minerals, high technology, renewable energy, health, skilling, startups and advanced materials.

"The world is going through a period of uncertainty. In such an environment, the India-France partnership is a force for global stability. We are combining France's expertise and India's scale," Modi said.

He added that the two nations share a "very special relationship" built on trust and shared democratic values. "Together with President Macron, we have given this strategic partnership unprecedented depth and energy. Based on this trust and shared vision, today we are establishing our relationship as a 'Special Global Strategic Partnership'," he said.

A key highlight of the visit was the virtual inauguration of the Airbus H125 helicopter final assembly line at Vemagal in Karnataka. The facility, set up by Airbus in collaboration with Indian partners, is expected to strengthen India's aeronautical manufacturing capabilities, boost workforce skilling and generate employment.

"Today's inauguration of the helicopter assembly line in India is another shining example of this deep trust. We are proud that India and France will jointly manufacture the world's only helicopter capable of flying to the heights of Mount Everest. And we will also export it to the entire world," Modi said. "In other words, the India-France partnership knows no boundaries; it can reach from deep oceans to the tallest mountains."

The agreements signed include enhanced defence cooperation, collaboration in critical minerals and advanced materials, and expanded engagement in clean energy and health sectors. Both sides also launched the 'India-France Year of Innovation' initiative to deepen people-to-people and startup linkages. Macron described India as one of France's most trusted partners and underlined the expanding defence relationship.

"From Rafale jets to submarines, we are expanding defence cooperation," he said. P6

The world is going through a period of uncertainty. In such an environment, the India-France partnership is a force for global stability. We are combining France's expertise and India's scale

Narendra Modi

India and France have decided to elevate their strategic partnership to the level of a Special Global Strategic Partnership. In diplomacy, that is a big deal

Emmanuel Macron

H 125 ASSEMBLY LINE

1. Both leaders virtually inaugurated a final assembly line in Karnataka to build Airbus H125 helicopters. It will enhance India's aerospace manufacturing capabilities
2. Referring to global flashpoints like Ukraine, Wasia and the Indo-Pacific, Modi said both nations support a multipolar world
3. The Modi-Macron meeting, included a joint drive through Mumbai in a show of personal rapport

Anthropic AI pact with Infy after rattling IT sector

PADMINI DHRUVARAJ @ Bengaluru

A fortnight ago, the launch of US-based Anthropic's AI tool had given Indian IT majors the jitters, raising questions about their future. On Tuesday, however, Infosys announced its partnership with Anthropic to develop advanced artificial intelligence solutions for businesses, aiming to bridge the gap between AI models that perform well in demonstrations and those that can operate effectively in highly regulated industries.

The two companies plan to help organisations in tightly regulated sectors adopt AI more effectively. Telecommunications, financial services, manufacturing and software development are expected to be the key beneficiaries.

Creating customised AI agents for clients

Anthropic's Claude AI models will be combined with Infosys' Topaz AI platform. Together, they aim to create customised AI agents capable of handling complex tasks. To begin with, a dedicated Anthropic Centre of Excellence will be set up for the telecom sector

Shares in Infosys climbed nearly 3% to about ₹1,407 on Tuesday following the announcement and closed the session with 2% higher.

"There's a big gap between an AI model that works in a demo and one that works in a regulated industry – and if you want to close that gap, you need domain expertise," said Dario Amodei, CEO and co-founder of Anthropic.

"Infosys has exactly that kind of expertise across important industries — telecom, financial services, and manufacturing. Their developers are already using Claude Code to accelerate their work and to create AI agents for industries that demand precision, compliance, and deep domain knowledge," he said.

The partnership focuses on building intelligent AI tools for enterprise use. "AI is not just transforming business — it is redefining the way industries operate and innovate," said Salil Parekh, Infosys CEO.

Early this month, Anthropic unveiled new automation tools for its Claude platform that can carry out tasks across legal, sales, marketing and data analysis functions. It triggered a bloodbath in Indian IT stocks, with the Nifty IT Index declining by 14%.

Govt planning to prune allocation for guarantee schemes in budget

ASHWINI M SRIPAD @ Bengaluru

WITH the state government at the receiving end of opposition barbs for spending large amounts on guarantee schemes and allegedly ignoring development projects, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah may reduce the allocation on these poll promises in the upcoming budget. He will do that by cutting down the number of beneficiaries not eligible for the schemes.

Soon after coming to power in 2023, the Congress government implemented the guarantee schemes. In the supplementary budget that year, Siddaramaiah had allocated Rs 35,410 crore for eight months. In 2024-25, the fund was Rs 56,000 crore and in 2025-26 (the current financial year), it is around Rs 51,000 crore. As the government has removed a number of beneficiaries from different schemes for not meeting the eligibility criteria, the allocation in the budget is expected to be lesser compared to previous years.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah at a pre-budget meeting with farmers in Bengaluru on Tuesday | EXPRESS

Now, 70-75 lakh women use free buses under the Shakti scheme every day. Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy told The New Indian Express that they are streamlining to bring accountability and transparency. That is the reason at the recent cabinet meeting, they approved a smart card for Shakthi scheme beneficiaries. "This will prevent the use of fake documents. At some places, even men are being issued free tickets by conductors, burdening the government. With the smart card, we can allow only eligible beneficiaries to get the benefits," he said.

Under the Anna Bhagya scheme, the government is providing groceries to 4.21 crore beneficiaries. But over the last few months, the Food and Civil Supplies Department has started weeding out bogus card holders. Minister KH Muniyappa recently said that 20% of card holders are not eligible and the government removed close to 4 lakh card holders. The department has also restructured the scheme replacing 5 kg rice with tur dal, sugar, salt and oil, which has reduced the expenses drastically. P4

FINAL ROLL

Gujarat voter list overhaul adds 5.6 lakh new voters

DILIP SINGH KSHATRIYA @ Ahmedabad

AFTER a three-and-a-half-month Special Intensive Revision drive, Gujarat's final electoral roll was published on Tuesday, revealing net addition of 5.60 lakh voters even as 3.95 lakh names were deleted.

The exercise digitised over 4.34 crore voter forms and reshaped district-wise electoral patterns, with Ahmedabad leading in additions and Surat topping deletions.

Before revision, Gujarat's electoral base stood at 5.08 crore voters. Post-draft publication, the count rationalised to 4,34,70,109, signalling large-scale removal of ineligible or duplicate entries.

By the time the final roll was sealed, the voter base rose to 4,40,30,725. The arithmetic is revealing: after corrections and claims, Gujarat registered a net addition of about 5.60 lakh voters compared to the draft roll an indicator that new eligible voters, especially youth and migrants, successfully entered the system after scrutiny.

Ahmedabad alone added 1,53,234 voters a significant surge pointing to rapid urban expansion and fresh eligibility. Surat added 1,01,578 voters, reinforcing its dual identity as both a high-migration and high-registration district. Rajkot (53,517), Vadodara (47,070) and Bhavnagar (40,074) also registered strong growth, signalling population consolidation in urban and semi-urban corridors.

About 3.95 lakh voters were removed for death, migration or duplication. Chief Electoral Officer Harit Shukla credited statewide participation, cooperation from voters, media, political parties and the civil society. In all, 34 district election officers, 182 voter registration officers, 855 assistant voter registration officers, 50,963 booth level officers and many volunteers participated in the exercise.

EXPRESS READ

Commuters can soon carry liquor in Metro

Bengaluru: Namma Metro will soon allow its passengers to carry liquor bottles, provided they are sealed. BMRCL sources said while there is in-principle approval, implementation is likely to take some time. There is no requirement for special permission or a separate licence to allow liquor bottles. Once approved, the provision will be incorporated into the Metro's rules and orders, they said | P2

MoS raises hope for J&K statehood restoration

Srinagar: Union Minister of State for Law and Justice Arjun Ram Meghwal on Tuesday hinted at restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir. "Our Home Minister Amit Shah has already assured in the Lok Sabha that the statehood will be restored to J&K. That right will be given to J&K but there is a process for it," he said, adding, "I feel you will soon get to hear about a decision in this regard" | P12

MODI INVITES NEW BANGLADESH PM TARIQUE RAHMAN TO VISIT INDIA

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla handing over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's invite to Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman (pic), shortly after the latter took his oath of office and secrecy, to visit India at a mutually convenient time, in Dhaka on Tuesday. "I take this opportunity to invite you, along with Dr Zubaida Rahman and your daughter Zaima, on a visit to India at a mutually convenient time. A warm welcome awaits you in India," Modi wrote. "The convergence between our respective developmental priorities shall serve as a guiding principle for our cooperation," he said | P11,14

Family leaves 4-yr-old boy asleep in cab

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

A mother accidentally left her four-year-old son asleep inside a cab in Hennur on Friday night and was safely reunited with him within an hour by the Hoysala patrolling police.

Around 8.30 pm on Friday, four-year-old Jian Chungi was returning home with his mother, Ginny, and five other relatives after visiting the ISKCON temple. On the return journey, Jian fell asleep in the back seat of the cab. Busy getting down from the vehicle, his mother and relatives forgot to wake him up or to take him from the cab, even as he continued to sleep in the rear seat.

The cab driver too failed to notice the child and proceeded to pick up other passengers. When Ginny realised that her son was missing, she recalled that Jian was asleep on the back of the taxi. She tried calling the cab driver, but could not reach him. She immediately dialled Namma 112 for assistance.

ASI Manjappa Koppal and Head Constable Satish Kumar, who were on patrol duty, reached the spot within two minutes. P7

BJP's defamation case against Rahul quashed

YATHIRAJU @ Bengaluru

STATING that a mere photograph of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on the advertisement is not sufficient to indicate that it was published at his instance with an intention to harm BJP at a time when he was neither president nor vice-president of the party, the Karnataka High Court quashed the defamation proceedings pending against him before a special court in the city on the complaint filed by the state BJP unit. The complaint was over publishing ads of "Corruption rate card" in newspapers during the 2023 Karnataka Assembly election campaign.

Justice S Sunil Dutt Yadav on Tuesday cited technical reasons and a series of procedural lapses on the part of the special court for the trial of criminal cases against sitting and former MPs/MLAs before taking cognisance of the offences and issuing a summons to Rahul. It cannot be done casually, Justice Yadav said.

S Keshava Prasad, Secretary, Karnataka BJP Unit, had filed the complaint alleging defamation through newspaper advertisements on May 5, 2023. P4

SPIRIT OF CRICKET

14 former captains to Pak govt: Treat Imran with dignity

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Chennai

IN a moving gesture, 14 former captains from different nations are rallying behind Imarn Khan, who is struggling with ill-health. Expressing deep concern over the jailed cricketer-turned-politician's deteriorating condition, the captains including Sunil Gavaskar and Kapil Dev have written a letter to the Pakistan government appealing for adequate medical attention and dignified conditions in line with international standards for him.

Even former captains like Sourav Ganguly supported it. The words of the letter are laced with emotion. "We, the undersigned former captains of our national cricket teams, write with deep concern regarding the reported treatment and incarceration conditions of Imran Khan, the distinguished former Captain of Pakistan and a legendary figure," read the letter titled *Appeal by former International Cricket Captains*. "Recent reports concerning his health — particularly the alarming deterioration of his vision while in custody — and the conditions of his imprisonment over the past two and a half years have caused us profound concern." The letter has also been signed by Michael Atherton, Allan Border, Michael Brearley, Greg Chappell, Ian Chappell, Belinda Clark, David Gower, Kim Hughes, Nasser Hussain, Clive Lloyd, Steve Waugh and John Wright.

Gower told this daily that the intitative was taken be Greg. "He asked I would sign, and I said yes," he said.

No Pakistan player has signed the letter that ends with emotional lines that transcends politics. "Cricket has long been a bridge between nations. Our shared history on the field reminds us that rivalry ends when the stumps are drawn — and respect endures. Imran Khan embodied that spirit..."

T20 ICC MEN'S T20 WORLD CUP HIT-WAVE

Today's Matches

11am: South Africa vs UAE (Delhi), **3pm:** Pakistan vs Namibia (Colombo), **7pm:** India vs Netherlands (Ahmedabad)

Aussies out

After Australia's loss to Sri Lanka, Zimbabawe-Ireland match was washed out. With this, Zimbabwe progressed to Super 8s